AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

Please amend claims 18, 26, and 34, as indicated below. This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1.-17. (Cancelled)

18. (Currently Amended) A method for text-to-speech conversion of a text in a first language comprising sections in at least one second language, comprising the steps of:

converting said sections in said second language into phonemes of said second language;

mapping at least part of said phonemes of said second language onto sets of phonemes of said first language;

including said sets of phonemes of said first language resulting from said mapping in the stream of phonemes of said first language representative of said text to produce a resulting stream of phonemes; and

generating a speech signal from said resulting stream of phonemes,

wherein said step of mapping comprises:

carrying out <u>non-acoustic</u> similarity tests between each phoneme of said phonemes of said second language being mapped and a set of candidate mapping phonemes of said first language;

assigning respective scores to the results of said tests; and

mapping each said phoneme of said second language onto a set of mapping phonemes of said first language selected from said candidate mapping phonemes as a function of said scores.

19.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 18, comprising the step of mapping said phoneme of said second language into a set of mapping phonemes of said first language selected from:

a set of phonemes of said first language including three, two or one phonemes of said first language, or

an empty set, whereby no phoneme is included in said resulting stream for said phoneme in said second language.

20.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 19, wherein said step of mapping comprises:

defining a threshold value for the results of said tests; and

mapping onto said empty set of phonemes of said first language any phoneme of said second language for which any of said scores fails to reach said threshold value.

21.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 18, comprising the step of representing said phonemes of said second language and said candidate mapping phonemes of said first language as phonetic category vectors, whereby a vector representative of phonetic categories of each said phoneme of said second language is subject to comparison with a set of phonetic category vectors representative of the phonetic categories of said candidate mapping phonemes in said first language.

22.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 21, wherein said comparison is carried out on a category-to-category basis by allotting respective score values to said category-by-category comparisons, said respective score values being aggregated to generate said scores.

23. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 22, comprising the step of allotting differentiated weights to said score values in aggregating said respective score values to generate said scores.

24. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 21, comprising selecting said phonetic categories from the group of:

      (a)   two basic categories of vowel and consonant;

      (b)   a category diphthong;

      (c)   vowel characteristics unstressed/stressed, non-syllabic, long, nasalized, rhoticized, or rounded;

      (d)   vowel categories front, central, or back;

      (e)   vowel categories close, close-close-mid, close-mid, mid, open-mid, open-open-mid, or open;

      (f)   consonant mode categories plosive, nasal, trill, tapflap, fricative, lateral-fricative, approximant, lateral, or affricate;

      (g)   consonant place categories bilabial, labiodental, dental, alveolar, postalveolar, retroflex, palatal, velar, uvular, pharyngeal, or glottal; and

      (h)   other consonant categories voiced, long, syllabic, aspirated, unreleased, voiceless, or semiconsonant.

25. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 18, comprising the step of pronouncing said resulting stream of phonemes by means of a speaker voice of said first language.

26.   (Currently Amended) A system for text-to-speech conversion of a text in a first language comprising sections in at least one second language, comprising:

a grapheme/phoneme transcriptor for converting said sections in said second language into phonemes of said second language;

a mapping module configured for mapping at least part of said phonemes of said second language onto sets of phonemes of said first language;

a speech-synthesis module adapted to be fed with a resulting stream of phonemes including said sets of phonemes of said first language resulting from said mapping and the stream of phonemes of said first language representative of said text, and to generate a speech signal from said resulting stream of phonemes,

wherein said mapping module is configured for:

carrying out non-acoustic similarity tests between each phoneme of said phonemes of said second language being mapped and a set of candidate mapping phonemes of said first language;

assigning respective scores to the results of said tests; and

mapping each said phoneme of said second language onto a set of mapping phonemes of said first language selected from said candidate mapping phonemes as a function of said scores.

27.   (Previously Presented) The system of claim 26, wherein said mapping module is configured for mapping said phoneme of said second language into a set of mapping phonemes of said first language selected from:

a set of phonemes of said first language including three, two or one phonemes of said first language, or

an empty set, whereby no phoneme is included in said resulting stream for said phoneme in said second language.

28.   (Previously Presented) The system of claim 27, wherein said mapping module is configured for:

defining a threshold value for the results of said tests; and

mapping onto said empty set of phonemes of said first language any phoneme of said second language for which any of said scores fails to reach said threshold value.

29.   (Previously Presented) The system of claim 26, wherein said phonemes of said second language and said candidate mapping phonemes of said first language are represented as phonetic category vectors, whereby said mapping module is configured for subjecting respective vectors representative of phonetic categories of each said phoneme of said second language is subject to comparison with a set of phonetic category vectors representative of the phonetic categories of said candidate mapping phonemes in said first language.

30.   (Previously Presented) The system of claim 29, wherein said mapping module is configured for carrying out said comparison on a category-to-category basis by allotting respective score values to said category-by-category comparisons, said respective score values being aggregated to generate said scores.

31.   (Previously Presented) The system of claim 30, wherein said mapping module is configured for allotting differentiated weights to said score values in aggregating said respective score values to generate said scores.

32.   (Previously Presented) The system of claim 29, wherein said mapping module is configured for operating based on phonetic categories from the group of:

        (a)   two basic categories of vowel and consonant;

        (b)   the category diphthong;

        (c)   vowel characteristics unstressed/stressed, non-syllabic, long, nasalized, rhoticized, or rounded;

        (d)   vowel categories front, central, or back;

        (e)   vowel categories close, close-close-mid, close-mid, mid, open-mid, open-open-mid, or open;

        (f)   consonant mode categories plosive, nasal, trill, tapflap, fricative, lateral-fricative, approximant, lateral, or affricate;

        (g)   consonant place categories bilabial, labiodental, dental, alveolar, postalveolar, retroflex, palatal, velar, uvular, pharyngeal, or glottal; and

        (h)   other consonant categories voiced, long, syllabic, aspirated, unreleased, voiceless, or semiconsonant.

33.   (Previously Presented) The system of claim 25, wherein said speech-synthesis module is configured for pronouncing said resulting stream of phonemes by means of a speaker voice of said first language.

34.   (Currently Amended) A computer readable medium encoded with a computer program product loadable in a memory of at least one computer, the computer program product comprising software portions ~~capable of~~ for performing the steps of the method of claim 18.